



Ahmd Emara – Students' Union President's Report and Updates on Manifesto Progression

This is an update on the report submitted previously in the last Student Council as the below mentioned projects are the core of my manifesto that I have been working on this year. I officially started my post on the 4th of July 2016.

Given that I was Frenchay Campus Officer last year, I was able to consult with many students and gather much feedback and hence my manifesto is based on what students want.

I would like first to give a brief introduction on what the role of Students' Union President entails:

- The significance of being the figurehead of an organisation representing 30,000 students and ensuring the student voice is heard with regard to University developments, engage the student population and find out the issues that matter to them most.
- Bring together all elements of The Students' Union, direct and ensure that the executive team deliver the overall objectives of The Students' Union.
- Lobbying, campaigning, surveying, researching, relationship building, negotiating and networking.
- Ensuring that students are represented in the development of student experience at UWE
- UWE Board of Governor
- Chair of the Board of Trustees
- On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Line Manage the CEO
- Lead the strategic development of the Students' Union
- Support the officers of the Executive Committee
- Co-ordinate Student Issue Campaigns
- Act as the main spokesperson on behalf of the Executive
- Attend external events as an ambassador of The Students' Union
- Attend and chair various Union and University Meetings including the Board of Trustees
- Delegate Leader at NUS Annual Conference

I got elected based on a manifesto including the following:

Improve the quality of your education, earlier released & flexible timetables and more study spaces!

I have worked with and lobbied the University to make this happen and so far timetables have been released earlier than ever this year as they got released on the 7th of September.

Update (February): Still lobbying for more improvements for next year.

Update (April): Completed

Lectures Captures has started and more study spaces have been made all over campuses' libraries; Frenchay library an increased study space by 20%, creating 200 new study spaces. Bower Ashton: Extra study space by converting the old journals room, and filing the journals in with the books. Also the silent study area has been enclosed to make it quieter. Glenside Library: refreshing the main room and west wing. This increased study space for individuals and groups. In addition, the toilets have been refurbished; creating a fully accessible toilet, and five gender-neutral cubicles.

Update (February): I have been lobbying for more study spaces and better facilities in the library which I hoping to take place sometime soon.

Update (April): Will be ready by next academic year

Better Networking Over Campuses so that you make the most benefit of your SU (BNOC):

Develop better communications between your SU and you across campuses and developing facilities on all campuses

I have been very committed to this point of my manifesto and I have spent at least one day a week on other UWE Bristol campuses to speak with students and get their feedback. This resulted in many activities being put in place on other campuses and also improvements such as the extended opening hours for Glenside Students' Union' bar.

Update (February): I was able to gather more feedback from students on different campuses and it resulted in some improvements like an additional microwave at Frenchay in the One Zone area and another one at Glenside campus.

Update (April):

Glenside:

New coffee shop provision (with extended opening hours and weekend opening) (timescales to be confirmed).

Two new 60 seat classrooms – (visuals) classrooms currently over-capacity. Some instances where students are standing for lectures/sessions. Potential to merge some smaller classrooms – 2K011 and 2K012, 1B006/007 and 1B017.

Storage will be created in B Block on the completion of the 60 person teaching room

Breast Feeding Room

This should be open by now and is opposite Traders next to the student accommodation. It contains a fridge and has restricted access – staff will need to register and their card updated and students will obtain a card to use it

It was confirmed that there is a baby changing facility within 20m or so of this room.

It is currently single occupancy and will be reviewed once demand is established. The area outside is a quiet area that could be used for resting.

City Campus: Based on students' feedback I have raised the issue of extending the opening hours for City Campus facilities such as studios.

Improved and timely transport

This year we have First bus 71 with its new route linking between Frenchay and Bower Ashton and also UWE Express linking between Frenchay and City Centre. Also I am working closely with UWE Travel on car parking issues and how we can make it easier to our students who are in need of the parking facilities according to UWE car parking policy. Cycling was one of my manifesto points and so far we have increased the number of bikes available to rent from UWE, improved facilities, worked closely with UWE Cycling Club and Green Team to promote cycling for more sustainable transport and new dryers will be installed soon to encourage more people to cycle.

Update (February): I have conducted a survey on the bus service experience in which we gathered over 750 responses in addition to the UWE Travel survey in which we worked collaboratively on and compiled both together in a report that I have submitted a copy to the Vice Chancellor during my 1:1 with him. Also I will be having a meeting with the bus provider to see how we can find a solution to some of the issues facing our students.

Update (April):

A Meeting was held on the 21st of March where UWE Travel Department, Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer of First were present:

It was acknowledged that although we have seen big improvements in the fleet (£25m investment) and the management of First Bus Bristol services in recent years, unprecedented traffic/roadworks in the last 12 months has greatly impacted on the users experience. Further improvements can be made and there is a desire to work more closely in partnership to help bring these forward.

First Bus have committed to;

- Providing a dedicated UWE bus inspector during term time
- Increasing dedicated drivers for some services inc 70, 71, 48A
- Upgrading control office to increase capacity of controllers
- Consider adding further buses to the UWE service, particularly during the start of the academic year
- Increase the mobile ticket differential to 50p compared with cash payments. Should encourage further uptake and reduce dwell times.
- Introduce contactless payment towards the end of 2017
- 'UWE driver inductions', to improve drivers connection to and understanding of the university

UWE have committed to;

- Work closely with First on bus stop allocations
- Provide timetable info/numbers of expected students
- Provide information on changes to accommodation (i.e. new halls)
- Provide information on student private accommodation spatial analysis (i.e. heat map)
- Investigate changes to timetabling to reduce the peaks, particularly during rush hour
- Support with communications and promotions, i.e. M-ticket, route info, new student bus guide etc.

- Investigate UWE support for development of improved bus checker app/real-time map tracker
- Continue support for Romney Av link and Metrobus integration
- Include free bus taster tickets in staff induction pack

A follow-up meeting for May will be scheduled.

Accommodation:

Around 15% of the students studying at UWE are international. Home students from low income backgrounds, also struggle to find guarantors. Without a guarantor many landlords and agencies usually require potential tenants to pay from 6 – 12 months’ rent in advance. This is now in discussion and hopefully will be in place soon.

Update (February): Still on going

Update (April): We were given four options by the university and we are now studying them and should be able to get back to the university after some more investigation

Option 1 - UWE pay administration fee on behalf of student to either UK Guarantor £299 or Housing Hand £295 (do students choose what scheme to use?)

Pros: No financial outlay for student. From reading UK Guarantor’s website it would appear that the majority of international students would be eligible to apply. Only passport and UWE acceptance letter required. Co-signer does not have to be UK based. Having a guarantor allows students to pay rent in instalments. Housing Hand guarantee international and UK students’ rent.

Cons: Only international students can apply to UK Guarantor. Students might struggle to get a co-signer. Some agencies might not accept a guarantor company.

Option 2 – UWE act as a guarantor and work with a third party

Not in contention as UWE want to see how it works at other institutions first

Option 3 - UWE act as the guarantor for students.

Pros: Fulfils the motion. Research by SU into other institutions acting as a student’s guarantor show that risk is low and additional staff resource is minimal (see attached). Student only have to fulfil UWE’s criteria for eligibility. Nominal admin fee to be paid by student. Available for both UK based and international students.

Cons: Possible financial regulations/articles/FCA licence issues for UWE

Option 4 – UWE save rooms in halls for those without guarantor

Pros: Other students unable to secure a guarantor (i.e. care leavers) could be helped

Cons: Does not fulfil the motion. Dictates where students have to live:

- I.e. UWE managed accommodation on Frenchay campus or opposite Glenside (Bower students?)
- More expensive than private rented sector housing
- Living with first years

Wellbeing:

I mentioned wellbeing in my manifesto and having a pets' room as well, which will be taking place soon.

Update (February): *We have had so far three successful Puppy Petting Day events all over UWE Bristol campuses with a high turnout from students who enjoyed the event and felt much better and relaxed after the spending some time with puppies. The event was in aid of Mind charity that supports people experiencing mental health problems and in the first two events we have raised £300 and waiting for the outcome of the third one.*

Also Guide Dogs will be on Frenchay campus on the 2nd of March.

Update (April): *Total money raised £400 and Guide Dogs event was a great success*



I am looking forward to saying goodbye to everyone soon maybe during our UWE Summer Festival and handing over to the newly elected team by end of June.

Sincerely,

Ahmd Emara